

# Polemic on Corruption Cases in Bengkulu Province during Ridwan Mukti's Reign

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to find out polemic on corruption cases in Bengkulu Province during Ridwan Mukti's Reign. This type of research is descriptive qualitative. The data source used secondary data sources originating from books and scientific journals. The corruption case involving the Governor of Bengkulu, Ridwan Mukti, and related parties shows the continuation of corrupt practices in the government environment. In the chronology outlined, involvement in accepting bribes related to development projects, providing positions with personal interests, and threats to contractors who did not support certain politics were revealed. This case contains serious impacts not only at the individual level, but also on society, politics, economics, and bureaucracy.

*Keywords:* Corruption, Ridwan Mukti's Reign, Polemic.

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## 1. Introduction

The development of corruption in Indonesia has now reached a very serious level and has entered in various aspects of people's lives (Bahoo et al., 2020; Vian, 2020). Corruption practices are growing from year to year, both in terms of the amount of state financial losses and methods that are increasingly systematic, sophisticated, and penetrate all levels of society (Jones, 2022; Luna-Pla & Nicolás-Carlock, 2020). Based on the Corruption Perception Index report from Transparency International (TI) since 1998, Indonesia has always been ranked in the top ten most corrupt countries in the world. From an economic perspective, corruption has negative impacts, such as waste in the use of natural resources, inhibiting foreign investment, detrimental to economic growth, lowering living standards, increasing state spending, damaging the efficiency of the tax system, encouraging capital outflow, and increasing the state budget deficit (Sarker et al., 2021; Sartor & Beamish, 2020). From a social, political, and economic perspective, corruption can weaken law and democracy, threaten the principles of good governance and effective public administration, damage markets, threaten human rights, as well as undermine institutions that guarantee stability, security and sustainable development. In order to overcome this problem, the government has issued Law Number 28 of 1999 concerning the administration of a state that is clean and free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism. This law emphasizes that state administration has an important role in achieving the ideals of the nation's struggle to create a just and prosperous society in accordance with the 1945 Constitution. Practices of corruption, collusion, and nepotism do not only occur among state administrators, but also involving external parties who can damage the foundations of social life, nation, and state. Therefore, a legal basis is required to prevent and overcome corruption cases (Carolina et al., 2022; Yu & Luu, 2021).

Corruption is a serious problem that has entrenched in various levels of government in various countries, including Indonesia (Pyone & Mirzoev, 2022; Saputra & Dhianty, 2022; Zaitul et al., 2023). One example of a corruption case that has surfaced is a case involving a Governor, namely the Governor of Bengkulu. This case uncovers corrupt practices in the procurement of infrastructure projects at the provincial government level. In 2017, the Governor of Bengkulu together with several related parties were involved in a corruption case related to the procurement of infrastructure projects within the Bengkulu Provincial Government. This case has had a significant impact not only on the level of public trust in government, but also on regional development. This case began with allegations of

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coordination between the Governor of Bengkulu, the private sector and contractors regarding the regulation of infrastructure projects (Absadykov, 2020; Danuta, 2017; Kozlovskiy et al., 2020). The project procurement process should be carried out transparently and based on competitive principles to ensure efficient and effective use of public funds. However, in this case, evidence was found that these projects were influenced by corrupt practices. The Governor of Bengkulu is suspected of coordinating with private parties to ensure certain contractors win these projects. In addition, there are indications that a sum of money that should have been used for regional development purposes was actually used for the personal interests of the Governor and related parties (Sharma et al., 2021; Sunaryo & Nur, 2022). Further investigations by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) revealed unusual fund flows and unethical practices in the project procurement process. This case creates concerns over the integrity of local government and raises serious questions about governance and accountability at the provincial level. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze corruption cases involving the Governor of Bengkulu and their impact on government governance, public trust, and regional development. Through the analysis of this case, it is expected that solutions and recommendations can be found to prevent the recurrence of similar corrupt practices in the future and increase transparency, accountability, and integrity in the management of infrastructure projects at the provincial government level (Ramadhana, 2019; Sriwidodo, 2020)

## 2. Research Method

This type of research is descriptive qualitative. The data source used secondary data sources originating from books and scientific journals. Technical data analysis using descriptive qualitative (Sugiyono, 2019).

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1. Complete Chronology and Analysis of Corruption Cases for Bengkulu Governor Ridwan Mukti

Ridwan Mukti, as Governor, namely a Civil Servant or State Administrator, is suspected of receiving a bribe worth IDR 1 Billion from Jhoni Wijaya, Head of Representative of PT. Mitrasarana Statics - Bengkulu. Bribes related to a road construction project of IDR 37 billion and the Curug Cold Water project amounted IDR 16 billion. This was done with the reason that Ridwan Mukti does not cancel the project contract that has been won by PT Statika Mitrasarana, which is contrary to his obligations, as Governor of Bengkulu Province who is the State Administrator not to commit acts of corruption, collusion, and nepotism as regulated in Article 5 point 4 Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 28 of 1999 concerning the Administration of a State, that is Clean and Free from Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism as well as Article 76 paragraph 1 letter e Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government as amended by Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 9 of 2014 2015 concerning the Second Amendment to Republic of Indonesia Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government. In September 2016, Ridwan Mukti, met Kutandi at his home to discuss the offer for the position of Acting Head of the Public Works and Public Housing Service (Plt. Kadis PUPR) of the Bengkulu Provincial Government. Ridwan Mukti also gave instructions for projects at the Bengkulu PUPR Service to be coordinated with his younger brother, Rico, to win certain companies. In October 2016, Ridwan Mukti appointed Kutandi as Plt. Head of PUPR Head. In March 2017, Kutandi met Rico in Jakarta and showed him a list of tender winners for projects at the Bengkulu PUPR Department.

Rico asked Kutandi to organize the project according to the list, but Kutandi refused. On April 19 2017, PT. Statika Mitrasarana signed a contract with Kutandi as Head of PUPR Department. On May 30 2017, a meeting was held at Ridwan Mukti's house, which was attended by Ridwan Mukti, Kutandi, and a number of officials. Ridwan Mukti was angry regarding the results of the work package auction at the PUPR Service, threatened to cancel the contracts of contractors who did not meet his expectations, and asked Kutandi to make a new list that he could understand. The meeting also included instructions to Syaifuddin Firman not to attend, with Ridwan Mukti planning to replace the winning bidder with his choice's contractor. Ridwan Mukti emphasized that the officials he had appointed should understand and support his plan and wishes. Then, Kutandi responded with readiness to obey Ridwan Mukti's orders. On the same date and time, at around 16.00 WIB, a meeting was held in the office of the Governor of Bengkulu. The meeting was attended by Ridwan Mukti, Syaifuddin Firman, Rico, Jhoni Wijaya, Ahmad Irfansyah, and Haryanto. Ridwan Mukti was angry and criticized the contractors because they did not support him during the Reginal Selection/*Pilkada*. Ridwan Mukti threatened to go bankrupt and terminate the contracts of all contractors who did not support him. He also directed Jhoni Wijaya to face him and threatened to "stick" the Chinese .

On June 7 2017, the meeting continued at the PT. Rico Putra Selatan attended by Rico, Haris Taufan, and Jhoni Wijaya. Rico conveyed Ridwan Mukti's request for the contractor to provide a commitment fee of 10% of the contract value. Jhoni Wijaya agreed with this amount, and Rico stated that the money had to be handed over through him. On June 12 2017, Rico came to the Governor's private house at the invitation of Ridwan Mukti. He asked for financial assistance ahead of Eid. Rico offered assistance of around five hundred million rupiah. Ridwan Mukti asked that this message be conveyed to other people. Between June 16 and 19 2017, advances amounted to 20% of two PT. Statika Mitrasarana projects was disbursed. On June 19 2017, on Soehinto Sadikin's order, IDR 1,648,800,000.00 was transferred to Jhoni Wijaya's personal account at Bank Mandiri. On June 19 2017, Jhoni Wijaya made a cash withdrawal of IDR 1,000,000,000.00 from the bank. The money was wrapped up and Haris Taufan was informed that a commitment fee of IDR 1,000,000,000.00 was available. On June 20 2017, Jhoni Wijaya delivered the money to the PT. Rico Putra Selatan. After meeting Rico, the money was handed over in a black A4 cardboard box. Rico asked Haris Taufan for help in making fake receipts for material purchases, which were actually used to cover up the commitment fee given to Ridwan Mukti. Before going to Ridwan Mukti's house, Rico confirmed Ridwan Mukti's whereabouts through Rian Hidayat (Aide to the Governor). Rico went to Ridwan Mukti's house bringing IDR 1,000,000,000.00. Based on this chronology, Ridwan Mukti and Lily Martiani Maddari, through the judge's considerations, handed down the sentence at the Bengkulu District Court as follows declare that Ridwan Mukti and Lily Martiani with the identities mentioned above, have been legally and convincingly proven guilty of committing a criminal act: corruption together, as in the indictment of Article 12 letter a of Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2001 concerning Amendments to Republic of Indonesia Law Number 31 1999 concerning the Eradication of Corruption Crimes jo. Article 55 paragraph (1) 1st of the Criminal Code. Sentenced Ridwan Mukti and Lily Martiani to prison for: 8 (eight) years each and a fine of Rp. 400,000,000 (four hundred million rupiah) provided that if the fine is not paid, it will be replaced by imprisonment for 2 (two) months; Imposed additional punishment on Ridwan Mukti in the form of revocation of the right to be elected to public office for: 2 (two) years after Ridwan Mukti has finished serving the main sentence. Based on this decision, Ridwan and Lily objected and filed an appeal to the Bengkulu High Court. However, the results of the appeal filed made Ridwan and Lily's sentences even more severe. The verdict reads declare that Ridwan Mukti and Lily Mariati, with the identities mentioned above, have been legally and convincingly proven guilty of committing the crime of corruption together. Sentenced Ridwan Mukti and Lily Mariati to prison for: 9 (nine) years each and a fine of IDR 400,000,000.00 (four hundred million rupiah) with the provision that if the fine was not paid, it would be replaced by imprisonment for 2 (two) months. Imposing additional punishment on Ridwan Mukti in the form of revoking the right to be elected to public office for: 5 (five) years after Ridwan Mukti has finished serving the main sentence.

### *3.2. The Impact of Corruption Crimes*

When corruption becomes a common phenomenon in a society, its effects are detrimental to the social order. The society became chaotic and without an effective social system. Individuals tend to think about personal interests (self-interest) only or even selfishly. Sincere cooperation and brotherhood are difficult to achieve. Corruption also endangers society's moral and intellectual standards, eliminating the main values or justice in society. The most dangerous long-term negative impact of corruption is damage to the younger generation. In an environment, where corruption has become commonplace, children grow up with antisocial behavior. The younger generation is becoming accustomed to dishonesty and irresponsibility (Vian, 2020). If this condition continues, the nation's future will become bleak. Corruption in achieving political power results in governments and leaders who lose legitimacy in the eyes of the public. This results in people losing trust in these governments and leaders, leading to disobedience to their authority. Corrupt practices in politics, such as fraudulent elections and money politics, can damage democracy and trigger social and political instability (Kohler & Dimancesco, 2020; Sumaryati et al., 2022). Corruption damages the economic development of a nation. If economic projects are filled with elements of corruption, the expected economic growth will not be achieved. Corrupt practices in implementing economic projects, such as bribery and nepotism, can hinder economic progress. Corruption also causes inefficiencies in bureaucracy and increased administrative costs. If the bureaucracy is infected with corruption, the basic principles of a rational, efficient, and quality bureaucracy cannot be implemented. Public services have become bad, only those who are able to give bribes will get good services. This condition can give rise to social unrest and inequality, even social anger which can result in the downfall of bureaucrats (Siahaan et al., 2023; Siddiquee & Zafarullah, 2022).

### 3.3. Corruption Prevention Efforts

Strengthening the supervision and control system at all levels of government needs to be carried out. The tender and project procurement process must be transparent and free from political interference or personal interests. Anti-corruption education programs need to be strengthened to increase public and government officials' awareness of the negative impacts of corruption (Alfada, 2019; Quah, 2022). Anti-corruption campaigns must involve all levels of society. Increasing the effectiveness of law enforcement and justice is very important. Legal procedures must ensure that perpetrators of corruption are appropriately punished and more proactive preventive measures are implemented. Leadership with integrity and commitment to the principles of transparency, accountability and justice are key in fighting corruption. The recruitment and selection process for public officials must involve an integrity assessment. The public needs to be invited to play an active role in monitoring and reporting potential corruption cases. Safe reporting mechanisms and protection for corruption whistleblowers need to be strengthened. This process should include the return of ill-gotten assets and provide significant financial penalties. Increasing ethics and integrity among the bureaucracy is crucial. In this case, enforcing discipline and a strict code of ethics can help prevent corrupt practices. The younger generation must receive education that strengthens the values of integrity, honesty and responsibility. Anti-corruption education programs must be integrated into the education curriculum (Siahaan et al., 2023; Siddiquee & Zafarullah, 2022).

## 4. Conclusion

The corruption case involving the Governor of Bengkulu, Ridwan Mukti, and related parties shows the continuation of corrupt practices in the government environment. In the chronology outlined, involvement in accepting bribes related to development projects, providing positions with personal interests, and threats to contractors who did not support certain politics were revealed. This case contains serious impacts not only at the individual level, but also on society, politics, economics, and bureaucracy.

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